



The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter
1st Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (M)
Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07



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The Phoenix Battalion is holding on strong here at Camp Taji. We've got our hands in several different aspects of the battle outside and inside the wire, which keeps us all very busy. Busy is about the best thing you can be in a place like this though. I'll keep my comments short, because everyone else has a lot to say. Hope you all are doing well back there. We appreciate your continued support of the Phoenix Battalion.

PHOENIX SPOTLIGHT

TUAV



The mission of the Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (TUAV) Platoon is to provide the Brigade Commander with real-time, day and night imagery of the battlefield. The 21 member platoon not only operates the Shadow TAUUV, affectionately known as a "bird". They also provide analysis and support to the 1BCT

Tactical Operations Center (TOC). As the birds are launched from the airfield, the small TOC crew assumes control and actually flies the Shadow to the target coverage area.

This small group works at a flight desk in the TOC and from a sheltered vehicle. The pilots actually fly the bird from this adjacent location and control it just prior to the landing. Both sets monitor the live video feed which is also projected on a wide screen monitor to the Brigade Commander and his Staff. The TOC desk directs the bird to look at particular area or an object according to the Brigade Commander's guidance. This information is relayed to the shelter over both a radio and a computer chat program. The shelter then guides the bird to the target, where they can zoom in, provide color and black and white video, and give an infrared (IR) image.



Above: TUAV Soldiers controlling aircraft.

Another key aspect is the analysis conducted by the TOC desk. They have the ability to see a much larger area than the troops on the ground, and they can then guide the soldiers toward the enemy. The crew is also very effective at spotting IEDs and suspicious activities. Overall, they are quite valuable in telling the Brigade Commander exactly what the bird is looking at and providing analysis and suggestions to possible enemy movement patterns.

This particular element of intelligence is known as a combat multiplier, and the A Co. soldiers are performing exceptionally well in this role. They continue to serve as the “eye-in-the-sky”, and although often keeping us awake at night with the bird’s not so quiet engine, we actually sleep much better knowing that they are watching over us.

NIGHTHAWKS!



Above: SPC Mikado and PFC Singleton just inside the Brigade TOC.

RAIDER BRIGADE TOC

All the wisdom of the 1st Brigade Combat Team flows from one building here on Camp Taji, the 1st BCT Tactical Operations Center (TOC).

Not just anyone can walk through the door, however. You must first pass muster with one of the security personnel overseeing the protection of the Brigade’s

nerve center. Depending on the time of day, you’ll have to convince PV2 Lee, SPC James, SPC Kowalski, PFC Mikado, or PFC Langer that you actually belong in the TOC. These fierce guardians ensure the safety and security of over three dozen Brigade planners, operations staff, and senior leadership.

Once inside the Brigade TOC, you notice the plans room, where several senior officers plan the future operations of the brigade. Any given day you’ll see Major Dargle and Major Repetski putting in more hours than is good for anyone.

Another door beckons. Beyond it lays the operations center, where current operations in the brigade are tracked on six large television screens. Each desk is home to an expert in a given field. At the aviation desk, you might find SSG Mellott, one of the newest arrivals to the brigade. The Brigade personnel and logistics sections both have a workstation, as does the Fires Effects Cell and the Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle crew. Overseeing all of these are the Brigade Battle Captains, Captains Chris Swickard, Ben Deissig, and Sam Olan. They are assisted by an army of radio operators and NCOs, who make tracking the operations of over 3,000 Soldiers seem effortless.

“THUNDERBIRDS” SUPPORT PLATOON

The Support Platoon in the 1st Special Troops Battalion is full of highly diverse and capable Soldiers who have succeeded in completing a variety of missions in addition to their primary Military Operational Specialty (MOS). The Support Platoon contains the largest diversity of MOS’s in the Battalion,

ranging from cooks, fuelers, and truck drivers, to light wheel and track mechanics, to generator and small arms repair mechanics, just to list a few. Since the deployment to Iraq, the Support Platoon has been serving the Battalion by providing Quick Reaction Force (QRF) teams, while still maintaining support operations.



Above: PFC Aguilar working hard to replace a gear hub seal.

Soon after the Battalion arrived at Camp Taji, the Support Platoon was given the task to form QRF teams. Those teams were conducting combat patrols in sector within two weeks of receiving the mission, which speaks volumes of the ability of its Soldiers and NCOs. The ThunderBird missions range from being the Quick Reaction Force, to providing security escorts, to operating an Observation Post, and when needed, conducting combat patrols in certain areas within the Battalion's area of operation (AO).

When asked what he enjoyed most about being part of the ThunderBird team, PFC Walker said "I love being out there with the other guys on my team. I've been able to learn more about people that I normally would not have the chance to work with." PFC Walker is one of our

cooks and back in garrison he did not have the opportunity to work with many of the other Soldiers in the platoon.



Above: SGT Garcia and SPC Moreno converse with a local Iraqi citizen while conducting a traffic control point (TCP) on Alan Road. Photo by Sgt. Davis.

The Support Platoon also consists of a team of mechanics and a recovery team who work relentlessly in the motor pool to ensure that all of the vehicles in the Battalion are repaired and maintained so that we can stay on the road and accomplish our mission. Their hard work is not always noticed, but the quote hanging in the PLL office says it all, "We may not be the pride, but without us, the pride don't ride." The recovery team is also tasked with a very important mission. Whenever a vehicle is damaged or breaks down outside the wire, they come to the rescue and help get our Soldiers and vehicles back inside the FOB safely.

There is still one other group of Soldiers to mention that are part of the ThunderBird Platoon. Five of our Soldiers have the vital mission of keeping our FOB secure. They protect the personnel inside by serving as Taji tower guards. They know it's not the most exciting mission, but they are still glad to serve in whatever way needed.

Overall, the Support Platoon is made up of Soldiers and NCOs that have

learned to work well under pressure. They possess what it takes to excel in this highly fluid combat environment. Every Soldier in the Support Platoon is vital to accomplishing our mission here.



Above: LT Maxcey and SSG Burton in front of the secondary school.

LOCAL PROJECTS

1st Special Troops Battalion Soldiers, along with a lot of help from the 490th Civil Affairs Company, delivered school supplies, shoes and clothes to Al-Rawabi Secondary School for Girls. The school supplies were donated by the University of Texas, in effort to support the Army's aide to the people of Iraq. The school's headmistress appeared very pleased to receive the gifts and was very thankful to the Soldiers who delivered them.



Above: Soldiers in the school giving out supplies and shoes.

LT Jordan Maxcey said, "It was a small act, but a great opportunity to engage the people in a positive way." Another Soldier from the STB, SSG Marian Burton said she was happy to be a part of the mission as well. During the mission, each girl received a pair of shoes, a t-shirt, a backpack, a mini-light and pencils. Overall, the mission was a great success and an uplifting experience for the Soldiers involved.

PHOENIX 6

Hi from Camp Taji. I would like to pass along to all of the families and friends of the Phoenix battalion what a fantastic job that each of your Soldiers is doing. From the articles in this newsletter, you can see the hard work, dedication, and good will that our Soldiers bring to Iraq. Our Soldiers interaction on a day to day basis with the Iraqi people is helping make Iraq a better place and bringing hope and opportunity to thousands of families. Take pride in your Soldiers and know that they are working tirelessly supporting the effort here in Iraq. Thank you and God Bless.

LTC John W. Cross, Phoenix 6.



To Dare Is To Do

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